1. Q. In light of Sheikh Yamani's recent stated view that his country considers Israel to be a more immediate threat than the Soviets, why does the Administration persist in selling them the AWACS? As a matter of fact, Yamani has stated that the communists infiltrate the Arab world through Israel.

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A. On April 23, Minister Yamani stated in a speech in New York, "To the Saudis, there are only two threats in this world: international communism and Israel. The first helps to reinforce our friendship with America, while the second is a threat to that friendship. It is difficult to conceive of a compromise in a situation like this. The second is far more tangible and more in evidence than the first one, and an actual danger is obviously worse than a potential danger." His remarks should be understood against the background of recent history in the Middle East.

Saudi Arabia has never engaged Israel in significant, sustained combat in any Arab-Israel War. Nevertheless, it is true that the Saudis share a view common in the Arab world that Israeli activities have created opportunities for the Soviet Union to expand its influence. The Saudis argue that such Israeli activities as the annexation of East Jerusalem and the establishment of settlements on the West Bank push moderate Palestinian and Arab elements into cooperation with the Soviet Union, which has consistently supported the Arab position on Arab-Israeli issues.

Although we do not agree with the Saudis in this assessment, we do share with them an understanding of the dangers to the Middle East from Soviet activities. The Saudis have in fact, been a leading force in countering Soviet efforts to increase

their influence in the area. The Saudis led the Islamic world in condemning the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. They encouraged the forces that led to the explusion of the Soviets from Egypt, Sudan, and Somalia. The Saudis are working with us to support the economic and defense needs of North Yemen, as an alternative to its reliance on Soviet arms and aid. There can be no doubt that the Saudis clearly recognize the dangers of Soviet expansionism.

We justify selling the AWACS to Saudi Arabia on the grounds that it is in the interest of Saudi Arabia, ourselves and our non-communist friends that the Saudi oil fields be adequately protected against destruction by air attack. We also justify the sale on grounds that US readiness to assist our friends in the Middle East with their legitimate defense requirements is essential to demonstrate our reliability as a security partner. Helping friends like the Saudis to defend themselves is the first line in building our own defenses in that vital region.